

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 6998

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, MASS, MILI, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN MOD LEANING TOWARDS AWACS

REF: USNATO 2528

1. ON MAY 13, AT HIS REQUEST, EMBOFFS CALLED ON COL. NARDINI, ITALIAN GENERAL STAFF OFFICER CHARGED WITH PREPARING AWACS POSITION PAPERS FOR DEFMIN FORLANI'S USE AT DPC. NARDINI WISHED TO DISCUSS WHAT HE FEARED WERE USG MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF ITALIAN AWACS POSITION.

2. ACCORDING TO NARDINI, ITALIAN NATO DELEGATION HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED TO VOICE GOI OBJECTIONS TO THE AWACS PROGRAM AT THE APRIL 16 MEETING (REFTEL) BECAUSE ITALIAN GENERAL STAFF BELIEVED THAT NEED FOR AWACS HAD NOT BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AND FELT PROGRAM BEING RUSHED FOR U.S. DOMESTIC REASONS. THEY WERE, HOWEVER, IMPRESSED BY ASYG TUCKER'S PRESENTATION AND THEN AGAIN BY THE CALM AND REASONED PRESENTATIONS MADE BY DR. CURRIE DURING THE AWACS
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DEMONSTRATIONS. IMOD MOST PLEASED BY CURRIE'S STATEMENTS AND USG

ACTIONS AUTHORIZING CAREFUL STUDY OF AWACS APPLICABILITY TO FLANKS.

3. IMOD NOW APPARENTLY OPEN TO ARGUMENT THAT AWACS IS BEST ANSWER TO LOW-LEVEL RADAR PROBLEM. THE AIR DEFENSE GAPS CAUSED BY POST-CYPRUS, GREEK ATTITUDES NO DOUBT WEIGH IN CHANGING ITALIAN CALCULATIONS. NARDINI LEFT NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, OF GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ITALIAN MILITARY ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR AWACS AND A FINAL POLITICAL/ECONOMIC DECISION TO DEVOTE THE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY INVOLVED.

4. IF ITALY SHOULD DECIDE TO ENTER THE AWACS PROGRAM, FUNDING IS A PROBLEM. NARDINI POINTED OUT THAT THOUGH THE PARLIAMENT HAS PASSED A LARGE MULTI-YEAR NAVAL CONSTRUCTION LAW AND THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE EXPECT SIMILAR BILLS TO BE APPROVED, NONE OF THE SERVICE BUDGETS HAVE PROGRAMMED FUNDS FOR AWACS. EACH SERVICE WOULD HOPE TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF AWACS; NONE WOULD WISH TO FOOT THE ENTIRE BILL. AS MAJOR PARLIAMENTARY PROCUREMENT ALLOCATIONS ARE MADE TO THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES RATHER THAN TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, THERE IS NO INTER-SERVICE BUDGET LARGE ENOUGH TO PAY FOR AWACS. THE MOD OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT HAS FUNDS THAT COULD BE ALLOCATED TO THE DEFINITION STAGE OF THE PROJECT BUT IT IS NARDINI'S UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOI WOULD BE BILLED FOR ITS SHARE OF THESE COSTS ONLY IF IT ACTUALLY BOUGHT THE AIRCRAFT. IN SUM, THERE APPEARS TO BE NO EASY INTERMEDIATE WAY IN WHICH THE IMOD CAN SHOW SERIOUS (E.G., FINANCIAL) INTEREST IN THE PROJECT.

5. NARDINI EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SHOULD LESS TECHNLOGICALLY ADVANCED ALLIES, SUCH AS ITALY, DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THEY COULF SHARE IN SOFTWARE AND "TRUE" INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS. THIS COULD INCLUDE UPDATING NADGE SITES TO COMPATIBILITY WITH AWACS, AND IN PREPARING AIRFIELDS TO RECEIVE AIRCRAFT. THE FIRST ORDER OF GOI EXPENDITURES COULD BE IN THESE AREAS.

6. NARDINI RAISED THE PERIPHERAL - BUT OBVIOUSLY BUREAUCRATICALLY REAL - PROBLEMS OF FLAG AND CREW NATIONALITIES. NARDINI REMARKED THAT NATO WAS NOT A LEGAL ENTITY WHICH COULD - IN PEACETIME ANYWAY - FILE FOR FLIGHT PLANS AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MYRIAD OF DETAILS INVILVED IN USING SOVEREIGN AIRSPACE. HIS FINAL OBSERVATION WAS THAT SINCE ITALIAN MILITARY IS PROSCRIBED FROM POSSESSING "BOMBERS", THEY

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LACK MILITARY PERSONNEL PROFICIENT IN SKILLS REQUIRED FOR FLYING AN AIRCRAFT OF E3A SIZE AND COMPLEXITY. EXTENSIVE AND EXPENSIVE TRAINING WOULD BE NECESSARY. SUMMING UP, NARDINI SAID HE WANTED TO BE SURE USG APPRECIATES THAT GOI WAS VERY SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING NATO ADOPTION OF AWACS AND IN NO WAY DESIRED TO SEE SUCH A POTENTIALLY VALUABLE SYSTEM DISCARDED WITHOUT ITS RECEIVING A FULL AND CONSIDERED HEARING. VOLPE

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